

CPAT Report No. 1901

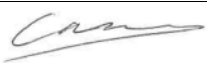


# Pengwern Hall, Llangollen

Archaeological Watching Brief



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS  
CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Client name: Mr and Mrs Stephen and Cathryn Johnson  
 CPAT Project No: 2648  
 Project Name: Pengwern Hall, Llangollen  
 Grid Reference: SJ 22455 41107  
 County/LPA: Denbighshire  
 Planning Application: PP/08643095  
 CPAT Report No: 1901  
 Event PRN: 214631  
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# CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>CRYNODEB</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>3 WATCHING BRIEF</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>4 FINDS</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5 CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>6 SOURCES</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>7 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION STATEMENT</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: WSI</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>3 OBJECTIVES</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>4 METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>FIELDWORK</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>SELECTION STRATEGY</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>POST-EXCAVATION AND REPORTING</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>SITE ARCHIVE</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b><i>DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN</i></b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>5 RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING</b> .....	<b>14</b>

## Summary

The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological watching brief in connection with renovations to the Grade II\* listed Pengwern Hall near Llangollen Denbighshire. The works consisted of the removal of a former lean-to building and the reduction of ground level to improve the damp-proofing of the undercroft.

The watching brief identified a previous attempt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to improve the damp-proofing of the undercroft that consisted of a 0.75m wide cut containing loose rubble. Within this rubble was one of the original window mullions from the southwest facing medieval elevation. A decorated stone was also found in the external wall of a chimney stack, with outer circles around a cross and quatrefoil design.

## Crynodeb

Bu Adran Gwasanaethau Maes Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys yn gwneud briff gwylio archaeolegol mewn cysylltiad â gwaith adnewyddu i Blas Pengwern ger Llangollen, Sir Ddinbych, sy'n adeilad rhestredig Gradd II\*. Roedd y gwaith yn cynnwys cael gwared â chyn benty a gostwng lefel y tir er mwyn diogelu'r is-grofft yn well rhag lleithder.

Nododd y briff gwylio ymdrech flaenorol yn y 19<sup>eg</sup> ganrif i ddiogelu'r is-grofft yn well rhag lleithder, a oedd yn cynnwys toriad 0.75 o led gyda rwbwl rhydd ynddo. O fewn y rwbwl hwn oedd un o'r pyst ffenestri gwreiddiol o'r ochr ganoloesol sy'n wynebu'r de-orllewin. Daethpwyd o hyd hefyd i garreg addurnedig yn wal allanol y corn simnai, gyda chylchoedd allanol o amgylch dyluniad croes a phedeirdalen.

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Stephen and Cathryn Johnson to undertake an archaeological watching brief in connection with alterations to Pengwern Hall (SJ 22455 41107). The alterations included the replacement of an external staircase, the removal of a disused septic tank and modifications to the damp proofing of the undercroft.
- 1.2. Pengwern Hall is a Grade II\* listed building, situated to the south-east of Llangollen and set within the grounds of Pengwern Hall Farm, covering an area of approximately 150 acres (Fig 1 and 2).



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*Figure 1. Site Location.*



*Fig. 2 Pengwern Hall within the grounds of Pengwern Hall Farm.*

- 1.3. As part of the associated groundworks, the rear porch was removed, and the external ground level was reduced to address damp issues affecting the undercroft. This was to be reinstated and sympathetically graded on the outside of the undercroft.

## 2 Historical Background

- 2.1. Pengwern was an important medieval estate and the ancestral home to the Mostyn family since at least the Norman conquest. The name Pengwern is historically linked to an important Early post-Roman kingdom and settlement founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst the medieval hall carries this name, the exact location of the kingdom's principal settlement is subject to debate, more often being linked to sites in Shropshire. The hall does however have a more direct connection to the Kingdom of Powys from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, including Lord Iorwerth of Pengwern, ancestor to the Mostyn family, born in c.1170, who was Seneschal to Prince Madog, founder of Valle Crucis Abbey. The abbey bishop, Trevor II, was also of the family (Carr, 1975, p7).
- 2.2. By the earlier 15<sup>th</sup> century, the hall at Mostyn had become the family's main residence, however, Pengwern remained in their ownership until c.1850. Local tradition is that Pengwern became a convent and grange of Valle Crucis Abbey, however, this is not documented. Approximately a century lies between the move to Mostyn and the dissolution of the Monasteries in c.1536, during this time, it is doubtful that the Abbey would have taken on new estates, instead, it is more likely to have remained a family home.

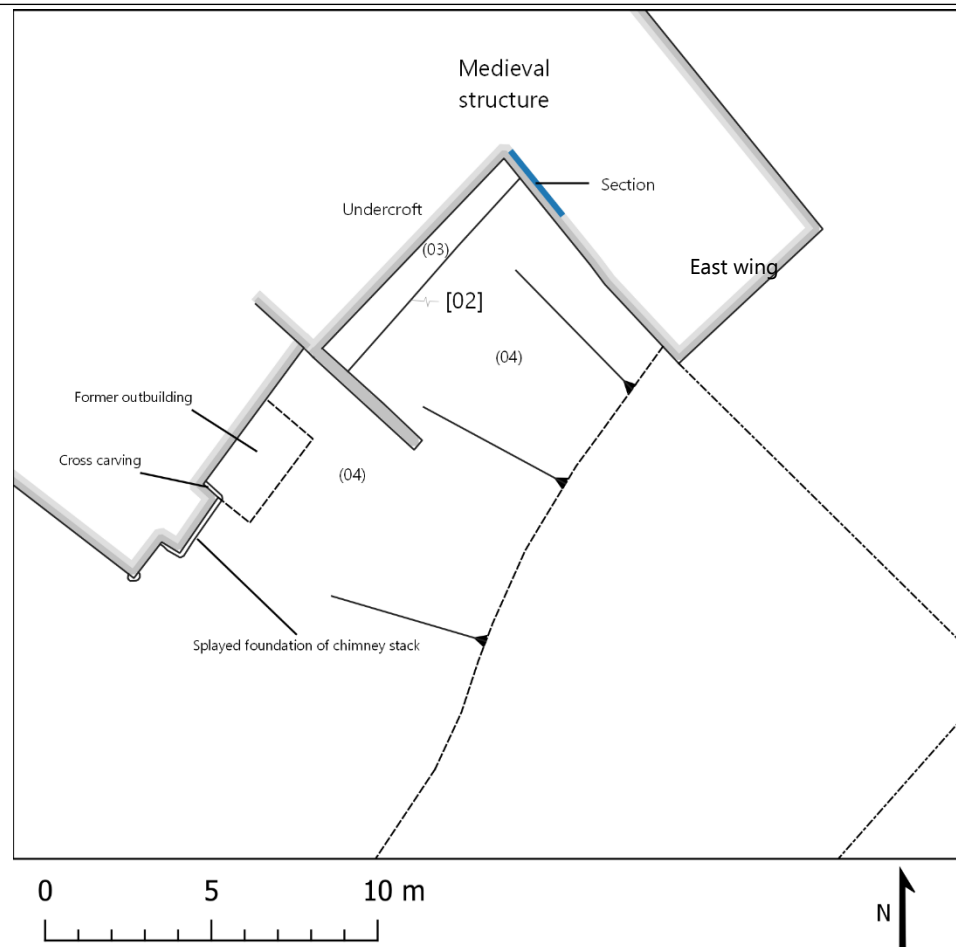
- 2.3. The main house was built in the 17th century and then extensively remodelled in brick c. 1770 by Sir Roger Mostyn; enlarged again in the late 19th century and re-windowed.
- 2.4. The surviving and in-situ medieval architectural features date from the period when it was the family's principal residence. The grade II listed six bayed house, with projecting gables, replaced an earlier structure with only the cellar remaining. The house is three storeys, rendered and has a pitched slate roof with projecting stacks and an early tapering lateral stack to the rear.
- 2.5. The 2-storey short medieval cross range is grade II\* listed and connects the house and range to the north. The cross range contains a barrel-vaulted undercroft with pointed and chamfered stone ribs.

### 3 Watching Brief

- 3.1. The watching brief was conducted on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*. (2014).
- 3.2. The works monitored during the watching brief included the removal of a stone-built lean-to formerly used as a wood store, the removal of a disused septic tank and the reduction of ground levels adjacent to the medieval undercroft. The planned excavations of drains leading from the building were not monitored as the natural geology had been reached throughout the soil-reduced area.
- 3.3. The former wood store shown in Figure 2 (noted as an outbuilding), was comprised of a rubble coursed stone-built structure abutting the main building (Figure 4). The floor and foundations were constructed directly onto a degraded mudstone natural (O4) with a single visible intrusion associated with a drain that ran under the main building. Exposed on the northeast-facing elevation of the chimney stack below the former roof line of the wood store, was an ornately carved stone (Figure 3) that had been sealed by a later rendering. The stone is medieval in origin and is likely to have been reused from the adjacent medieval structure or nearby Valle Crucis. The carving depicts a cross with a central quatrefoil rose surrounded by concentric circles and is possibly part of a reused tombstone.



Fig. 3 Carved medieval stonework built into chimney stack CPAT photo 5018-9 and 28



*Fig. 4 Plan of ground reductions showing cut feature [02].*

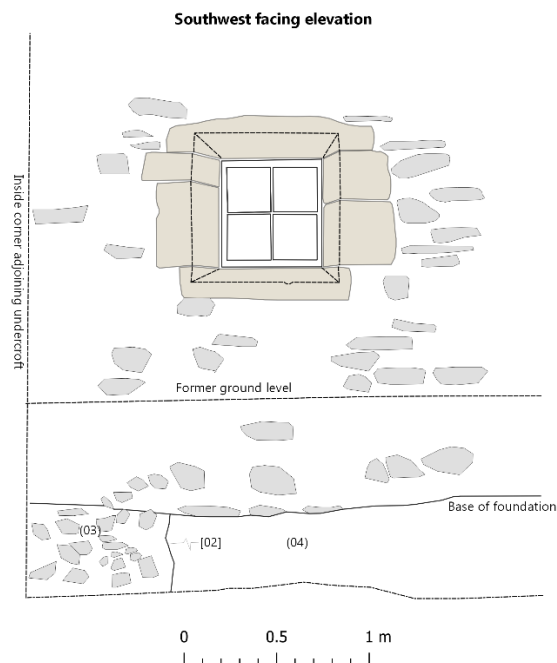
- 3.4. The excavation of the garden turf identified a shallow 0.3m thick topsoil (01) directly overlying a yellow compact degraded mudstone natural (04). Cut into the natural geology along the northeast to southwest orientated wall of the undercroft was a linear vertical-sided trench [02] infilled with loose rubble (03) (Figure 7) that contained 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century material as well as a section of stone window mullion, likely to be from the upper southwest facing window of the eastern medieval wing (Figures 4 and 5). The fill abutted the rubble coursing of the undercroft, the full depth of which was not reached. The cut feature is likely to be associated with a 19<sup>th</sup>-century attempt to improve the damp proofing of the undercroft by creating a soakaway layer. As a result, this feature is likely to have removed all earlier features including the medieval construction cut to the undercroft.
- 3.5. During the excavation, the foundation level of the eastern wing of the medieval building was also exposed. There was no visible construction cut, with the rubble-coursed foundation extending only 0.6m below the modern turf level (Figure 6). Up to 0.4m of natural geology was exposed below the foundation. The fill of the cut feature [02] could be seen in the section below the foundations of the east wing, however, it is unclear to what extent the later cut feature extended below this foundation. Based on the finds within the rubble, it is likely to have been a later undermining associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century remodelling (Figures 6 and 7).
- 3.6.





*Fig. 5 Photo showing southwest facing upper window CPAT photo 5018-23 and decorative mullion found in (03) CPAT photo 5018-16*

3.7. The disused septic tank located in the centre of the lawned area (Figure 2) was fully removed. Initially, the tank was exposed to the depth of the surrounding natural (Figure 8) and then removed using a toothed bucket. Due to the presence of contaminated water, the resulting hole was instantly backfilled using the extracted natural and rubble. There was no visible construction cut to the tank, however, most of the feature was cut into the natural and therefore is unlikely to have overlaid any earlier features.



*Fig. 6 Southwest facing elevation of medieval structure showing foundation level and soak away trench [02].*



*Fig. 7 Photo showing rubble-filled cut along undercroft wall CPAT photo 5018-20*



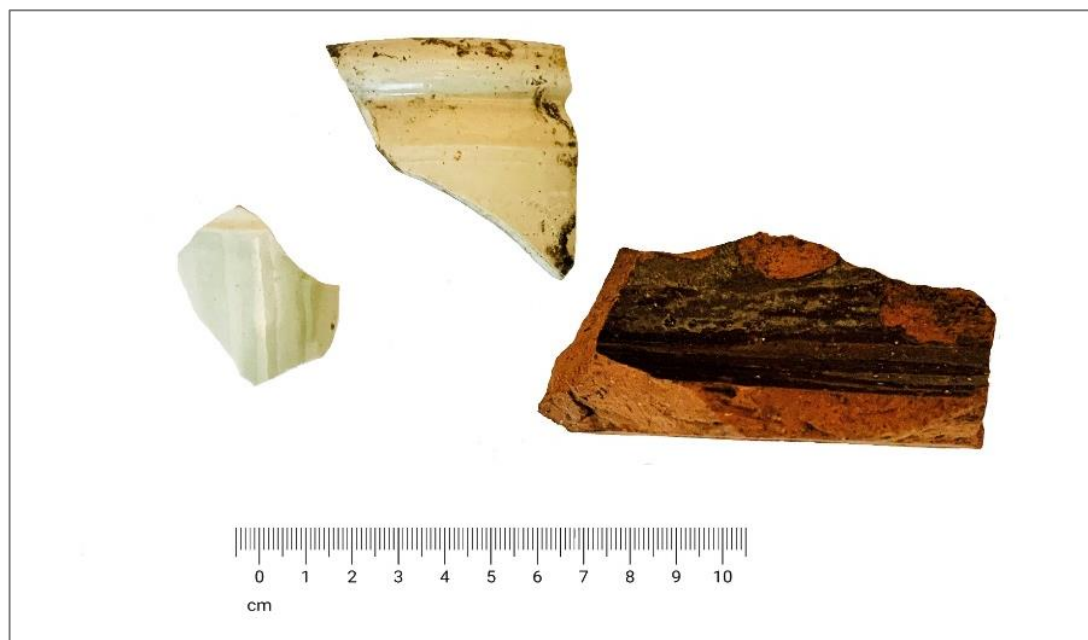
*Fig. 8 Photo showing remains of septic tank CPAT photo 5018-29*

## 4 Finds

- 4.1. Apart from the carved decorative stone found set into the chimney stack, in total three sherds of ceramic were recovered and a large carved stone from a window mullion (not retained), all of which were from context (03). The finds likely reflect a period of renovations after the sale of the hall by the Mostyn Family.

Table 1: Details of finds recovered.

Context	Quantity	Description	Date
03	1	Rim sherd of buff stoneware (not retained)	18-19 <sup>th</sup> century
03	1	Base sherd of brown glazed red earthenware jar (not retained)	18-19 <sup>th</sup> century
03	1	Body sherd of fine stoneware vessel (jug or jar) (not retained)	18-19 <sup>th</sup> century
03	1	Large carved section of window mullion (not retained)	Late Medieval – Early Post-Medieval



*Fig. 5 Ceramic finds*

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The watching brief was undertaken on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 and monitored the removal of a stone-built outbuilding, a disused septic tank, and the reduction of ground levels adjacent to the medieval undercroft.
- 5.2. During the watching brief, a cut feature containing a loose rubble fill was identified running alongside the undercroft wall. The rubble fill contained a redeposited section of ornate carved

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stone window mullion, likely from the adjacent first-floor window of the eastern medieval wing, as well as pottery dating to between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The feature is most likely associated with the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century renovations of the hall, at which time a similar problem faced by the current owners was addressed through the excavation of a steep-sided trench running alongside the undercroft wall, which was then backfilled with loose rubble to form a drainage channel. The presence of the mullion suggests that the windows of the medieval hall were also being modified at the time this feature was constructed.

- 5.3. The excavation of this channel also demonstrated how shallow the foundations of the eastern wing of the medieval building are. The lack of visible construction cut, as well as the very shallow topsoil depth, suggests that there are unlikely to be many surviving medieval deposits within this area of the hall.
- 5.4. During the removal of the lean-to building, an ornate medieval carved stone was identified built into the chimney stack of the main house. The carving comprised a cross with a central quatrefoil rose that may be part of a reused tombstone. The stone may have originated from the earlier buildings which was replaced by the current three-storey house, however, given the known links to Valle Crucis, it is also possible that the stone may have been brought from the abbey.

## 6 Sources

### Published sources

Carr, A. D. 1975. *The Mostyn family and estate, 1200-1642*. University of Wales, Bangor.

### Unpublished sources

Grant, I. 2022. *Pengwern Hall Written Scheme of Investigation*. Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust

## 7 Archive deposition Statement

The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The digital photographs only will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the paper/drawn/digital archive with the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW).

### 7.1. Archive summary

CPAT Event PRN: 214631

44 digital photographs, CPAT film no 5018

1 Watching brief recording sheet

1 permatrace sheet drawings

1 x small bag of pottery

## Appendix 1: WSI

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been instructed by Mr and Mrs Stephen and Cathryn Johnson to undertake an archaeological watching brief in connection with alterations to Pengwern Hall (SJ 22455 41107) including replacement of external staircase, new foul drainage system and bio disc package treatment plant, landscaping and associated works.
- 1.2. Pengwern Hall is a Grade II listed building, situated to the south-east of Llangollen and set within the grounds of Pengwern Hall Farm, covering an area of approximately 150 acres (Fig 1 and 2).



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*Figure 1. Site Location.*

- 1.3. As part of the associated groundworks the rear porch, which is a later modern addition, will be removed. The high external ground level is not the original ground level and is causing damp issues to the undercroft. Subsequently the original ground level will be reinstated and sympathetically graded on the outside of the undercroft.
- 1.4. The existing cold store slate slabbed flooring will be removed, the floor reduced and dug out for new floor construction and then re-instated with the slate slabs. These will be placed back into their original location.

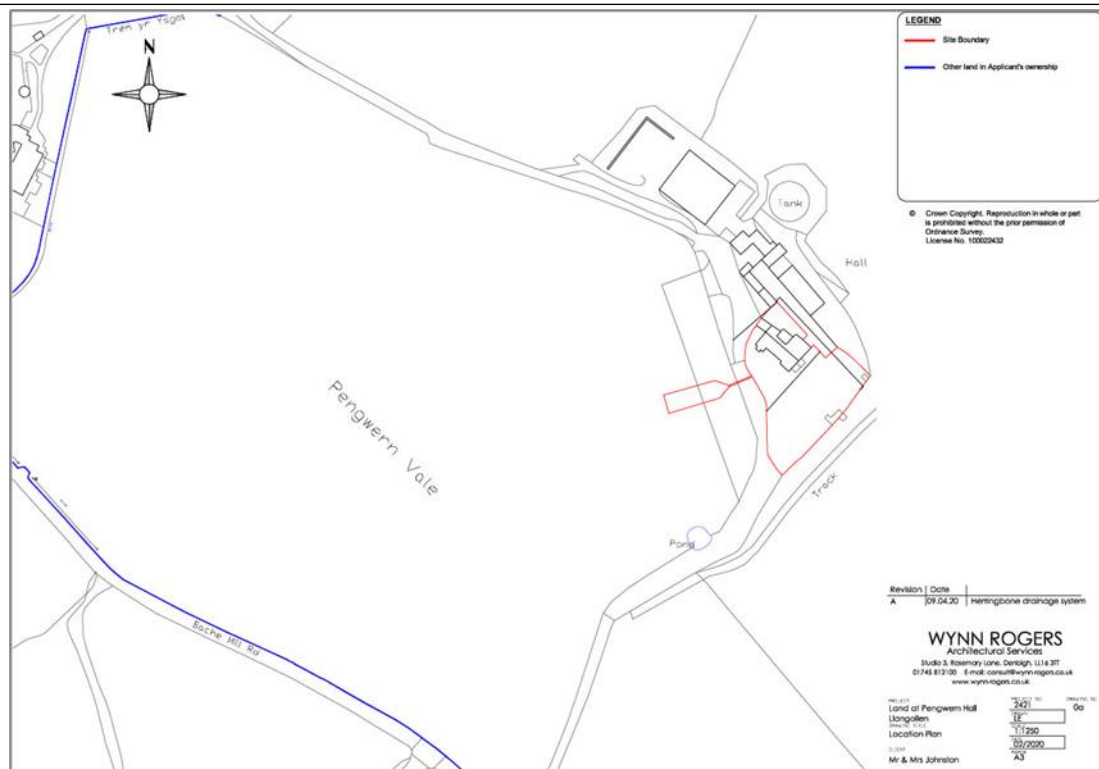


Fig. 2 Pengwern Hall within the grounds of Pengwern Hall Farm.

1.5. Planning permission (**PP/08643095**) was granted with the inclusion of the following condition relating to archaeology:

*3. The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeological contractor is present during*

*the undertaking of any ground works in the development area so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted in accordance with an approved written scheme of*

*investigation. The archaeological watching brief must meet the standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching*

*briefs. A copy of the resulting report should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the*

*Development Control Archaeologist, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (The Offices, Coed y Dinas, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 8RP Email: [mark.walters@cpat.org.uk](mailto:mark.walters@cpat.org.uk) Tel: 01938 553670).*

*After approval by the Local Planning Authority, a copy of the report and resulting archive should*

*also be sent to the Historic Environment Record Officer, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust for inclusion in the regional Historic Environment Record.*

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*The reason(s) for the conditions(s) is(are):*

- 1. To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.*
- 2. For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development.*
- 3. To secure preservation by record of any archaeological remains which may be revealed during ground excavations for the consented development.*

## 2 Historical Background

- 2.1. Pengwern was an important early-medieval settlement and home of the ancestors of the house Mostyn since well before the 11th century. Rhys Sais, who died c.1073, owned the cantref (district), known as Nanheudwy. Lord Iorwerth of Pengwern, born in c.1170, was Seneschal to Prince Madog, founder of Valle Crucis Abbey. The abbey bishop, Trevor II, was also of the family. By the earlier 15th century, a settlement at Mostyn had become the family's main residence, however, Pengwern remained in their ownership until c.1850.
- 2.2. Local tradition is that Pengwern was a convent and grange of Valle Crucis Abbey, however this is not documented. Approximately a century lies between the move to Mostyn and the dissolution of the Monasteries in c.1536 but nevertheless it remained a family home and despite a modest revival it is not a period when one would expect the Abbey to be taking on new estates. The main house was built in the 17th century and then extensively remodelled in brick c. 1770 by Sir Roger Mostyn; enlarged again in the late 19th century and re-windowed.
- 2.3. The surviving and in-situ medieval architectural features date from the period when it was the family's principal residence. The grade II listed six bayed house, with projecting gables, replaced an earlier structure with only the cellar remaining. The house is three storeys, rendered and has a pitched slate roof with projecting stacks and an early tapering lateral stack to the rear.
- 2.4. The 2-storey short medieval cross range is grade II listed and connects the house and range to the north. The cross range contains a barrel-vaulted undercroft with pointed and chamfered stone ribs.

## 3 Objectives

- 3.1. The objectives of the watching brief are:
  - to monitor all groundworks and associated works e.g landscaping, drainage, internal floor reductions and alterations to Pengwern Hall.
  - to investigate and record any archaeological features/deposits/artefacts identified during the watching brief;
  - to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief and the research potential of the site archive;
  - to prepare a final publication of the results in an appropriate regional or national journal, depending on the nature and significance of any archaeology.

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## 4 Methodology

### Fieldwork

4.1. The watching brief will be conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2020). The watching brief will include the archaeological supervision of all relevant groundworks and appropriate archaeological excavation and recording of any significant features or deposits which may be revealed. Landscaping, ground reduction, should preferably be undertaken carefully using a machine with a flat, toothless bucket under the direction of the archaeologist to ensure that the correct level is reached whereby any archaeological features can be identified. The excavation of any archaeological features or deposits will be undertaken by hand using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation:

- The presence or absence of archaeological features encountered during the ground works will be noted.
- Where features of archaeological interest are identified during the ground works they will be systematically investigated by hand with sufficient work being undertaken to determine their date, character and function, using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation and in accordance with CIfA Standard and Guidance.
- All features will be located as accurately as possible on an overall plan of the development at an appropriate scale, showing boundaries depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping.
- Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms, using a continuous numbering system, and be drawn and photographed as appropriate.
- Plans will be drawn on permatrace to a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50, as appropriate.
- All photography will be taken using a digital SLR camera with a minimum resolution of 12 mega pixels, including a metric scale in each view, with views logged in a photographic register.
- In the event of human burials being discovered the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) will be informed. The remains will initially be left in situ, and if removal is required, a MoJ licences will be applied for under the Burial Act 1857.
- In the event of finding any artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasures Act 1996, the appropriate procedures under this legislation will be followed.

### Selection Strategy

4.2. Unstratified finds will only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest. All artefacts will be retained from stratigraphically secure contexts of 18th-century date or earlier. In the case of later or disturbed contexts, all 18th-century or earlier material will be retained, together with a sample of later finds to assist with dating and phasing, unless later deposits/artefacts are deemed to be of high archaeological value.

4.3. CPAT has a retention policy for artefacts which prioritises as follows:

#### High priority for retention

- Rare finds from stratified and unstratified contexts
- Prehistoric and early medieval assemblages
- Key stratigraphic dating assemblages crucial to the structural development of the site
- Assemblages which are not well represented in museum collections



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### High priority for disposal

- Unstratified material unless intrinsically dateable and unusual/rare
- Artefacts from residual/intrusive contexts unless of key stratigraphic importance to the site
- Assemblages already well represented in museum collections
- Unprocessed environmental/soil samples

### Post-excavation and reporting

- 4.4. All artefacts and environmental samples will be treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and a sampling strategy will be developed as appropriate:
- All stratified finds will be collected by context, or where appropriate, individually recorded in three dimensions. Unstratified finds will only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest.
  - All finds and samples will be collected, processed, sorted, quantified, recorded, labelled, packed, stored, marked, assessed, analysed and conserved in a manner appropriate to their composition and in line with appropriate guidance.
  - arrangements to assess and study any artefacts, assemblages and environment samples.
  - Any artefacts recovered during the watching brief will be deposited with an appropriate museum, subject to the permission of the owner.
- 4.5. Following the on-site work an illustrated report will be prepared containing conventional sections to include:
- Non-technical summary
  - Introduction
  - Site location
  - Archaeological Background
  - Watching brief
  - Conclusions
  - References
  - Appropriate appendices on archives and finds
- 4.6. The report summary will be provided in English and Welsh, in accordance with the *Guidance for the Submission of Data to the Welsh Historic Environment Records (HERs) V1* (July 2018).

### Site archive

- 4.7. The overall archive will conform to guidelines described in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE), Historic England 2015, the CIfA (2020) *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* and *The National Standard and Guidance to Best Practice for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives in Wales* (NPAAW, 2017).
- 4.8. The paper and digital archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record (NMR), RCAHMW, including a copy of the final report. This archive will include all written, drawn, survey and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken. A copy of the digital archive only will also be lodged with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

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### ***Data management plan***

- 4.9. The project will be conducted in accordance with CPAT's data management policy. All paper records will be collated, catalogued and labelled with the unique project code. All digital data will follow strict file naming, to include the unique project code, and be sorted into a standard series of sub-folders. The digital data will be catalogued, including a list of file types and relevant software.

## **5 Resources and programming**

- 5.1. The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled archaeologist under the overall supervision of Tim Malim, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). CPAT is also a CIfA Registered Organisation and as such agrees to abide by their *Code of Conduct* (2019) and the Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology (2014).
- 5.2. All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist(s) who conducted the site work. Copies of the report will be deposited with the client and the regional Historic Environment Record within one month of the completion of on-site works. If appropriate, a short report will be published in *Archaeology in Wales*.
- 5.3. The client should be aware that in the event that significant archaeological remains are revealed there may be a requirement for more detailed excavation and specialist services. Any further work over and above the original watching brief and report would be the subject of a separate WSI and costing. The following figures provide an indication of the types of additional services and indicative costs which might be required, for which the client is advised to make some provision.
- 5.4. Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 5.5. CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.

I Grant MCIfA

23 August 2022